

missed Humboldt's hand in his study of Peru which lay just beyond Humboldt's fields.

Dr. de Terra's biography is a highly successful portrait (with a frame!) done in sepia with plunging strokes. This biography does not intend to be exhaustive as the good index will quickly demonstrate. There is still a genuine need for a full and documented biography along natural history lines, dressed for its immense potential reference value but blind to Brentano's show window. This unborn biography will integrate from the rich *reliquiae* of Humboldt letters around the world, identify their personalia, trace the intercourse across the Atlantic, from amateur to mentor and back again, all arrayed at finger-tip accessibility by a complete index. The botanical collector Benedict Roezl discovered a new lily in California in 1869 and as a centennial gesture it was named for Humboldt. How fitting that Humboldt's second centennial should be marked by an Olympian biography. Shall it be called "Prometheus Unbound"?—JOSEPH EWAN, TULANE UNIVERSITY, NEW ORLEANS, LA.

ASCLEPIAS SYRIACA VAR. KANSANA IN NEW YORK STATE.—At the time of the 1952 meetings of the Botanical Society of America in Ithaca, New York, one of the local field trips planned for the Ecological Society included a stop northeast of Geneva on the east side of Seneca Lake. In the waste ground bordering the road was an extensive stand of *Asclepias syriaca* L. All gradations were observed from the essentially plain-surfaced fruits of forma *inermis* to the spiny-fruited var. *kansana* (Vail) Palmer & Steyermark. The collection data for the plants referred to var. *kansana* are "open ground bordering ditch along east side of highway 96 A, northeast of Geneva, on east side of Seneca Lake, Seneca Co., New York, September 11, 1952, Steyermark & Swink 74625." The range given for this spiny-fruited variety in Gray's Manual, eighth edition, is "Ia., Neb., Mo. and Kans." While Woodson in his recent monograph of the genus (Ann. Mo. Bot. Gard. **41**: 105–108. 1954) does not consider var. *kansana* to merit taxonomic rank, he does acknowledge the fact that the plants of the western states are *predominantly* spiny-fruited, while those of the eastern states

are *predominantly* smooth-fruited (loc. cit. p. 108, text and footnote). He relegates their status, however, to races and clines. Dr. Woodson's careful monograph notwithstanding and with our highest admiration for this work, the fact still remains that the field worker and local botanist, examining the two extremes of the fruit, one from the west with the spiny processes conspicuous, the other from the east nearly or quite plain-surfaced, are impressed by the *constancy* and *prevalence* of the spines or lack of them, depending upon the geographical location. The student and local botanist in Missouri and Kansas encounters the spiny-fruited type practically all the time, whereas in the eastern states the excessively spiny-fruited type is practically unknown. Since this morphological character can be combined to a certain degree with a circumscribed range, it does not seem to the present authors inappropriate to maintain varietal status for the predominantly western spiny-fruited var. *kansana*. If the spiny-fruited plants were found to be everywhere within the range of the smooth-fruited or less spiny types, there would be no point in maintaining a geographic status for the spiny-fruited plants. One expects to find every kind of intergradation where the boundaries of the one type pass over into those of the other, but that should not mitigate against the recognition of the two varieties, at least from the standpoint of a convenient category or name for purposes of identification. Also from the geographical standpoint, it would appear proper to retain taxonomic recognition of var. *kansana*. In addition to the single station for var. *kansana*, cited above for New York state, a new eastern record, the authors observed the spiny-fruited type in various parts of northern Illinois and Indiana. If the var. *kansana* is maintained, its range should be extended to include the states of Illinois, Indiana, and New York.—JULIAN A. STEYERMARK AND FLOYD A. SWINK, CHICAGO NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM AND COLLEGE OF PHARMACY, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS.

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